

## AFRL, Rome seek technology to avert friendly fire

by *Francis L. Crumb, Information Directorate*

ROME, N.Y. — The Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate recently awarded a \$729,500 contract to Charles Stark Draper Laboratory of Cambridge, Mass., for development of technology to identify personnel and equipment through radio signals.

The Digital Radio Frequency Tag (DRAFT) program, funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) of Arlington, Va., seeks to use both airborne and space-based surveillance radar to identify friendly forces from the emanations of their tagging devices.

“The first phase of the DRAFT program is the preliminary design of tags that will be used with a variety of airborne and spaceborne radars,” said David D. Ferris Jr., program manager in the directorate’s Information and Intelligence Exploitation Division. “We expect the tag designs to be

flexible enough to work with a variety of radars.”

“Information will be uplinked from the ground to the radar, or downlinked to the tag from the radar as a method of ‘querying’ its identity,” Ferris said. “The tag device could be attached to a friendly vehicle or carried by an individual soldier or airman on the ground.”

“Identifying vehicles or personnel will significantly reduce the possibility of fratricide, or ‘friendly fire’ incidents,” Ferris said. “The goal is to differentiate friendly forces from the opposition and to protect our own troops. The technology may also benefit civilian law enforcement operations, where a device carried by a police officer in an undercover operation would allow the tracking of the officer’s location at all times.” @